

Pele

Pele was born in the South American country of Brazil. He lived in a small village and his family was very poor. But Pele had a dream. He wanted to become a professional soccer player. He could not afford a soccer ball so he fashioned one. He took an old sock, stuffed it with newspapers, and sewed it together with string. It was a poor substitute, but it was better than nothing. Pele and his friends formed their own team. They did not have enough money to purchase shoes, but that did not stop them. They played barefoot and became known as the “barefoot team.”

Pele and his friends saved their money, and eventually the team was able to get a regular ball and shoes. Pele discovered that the ball could be better controlled when he wore shoes. Pele and his team practiced continuously. They soon began playing older and more established teams from the big cities. The team began to win most of its games. Pele was the star of the team. People thought this was amazing because he was only eleven years old!

Pele’s skill at soccer came to the attention of influential people, and when he was fifteen, he was signed by the Santos team. Pele led the Santos team to many championships. He also led the Brazilian national team to three world championships. Pele also holds many records and has scored over twelve hundred goals in his career as a professional player.

Pele decided to retire in 1974. Then he changed his mind and came to the United States, where he joined the New York Cosmos. Soccer had not been very popular in the United States up to this point, but Pele’s presence had a dramatic effect. Crowds at games doubled and tripled as people came to see the famous and exciting Pele. Games began to be shown on television. Soccer gained in popularity and many children in the United States began to play soccer. Soccer is now one of the most popular sports in the United States, due in part to the dream of a young boy in Brazil.